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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 28th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 16 July 1992, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. MROZIEWICZ (Poland)

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Operational activities for development (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (E/1992/28, Supp. No. 8; E/1992/29, Supp. No. 9; E/1992/64, 73 and 98; A/47/264-E/1992/71; E/1992/L.23)

Mr. CHIRILA (Romania) said that the Council's deliberations were undoubtedly of particular importance for the 1992 triennial policy review of operational activities. His country was unconditionally attached to the principle of strengthening those activities on the basis of genuine consensus between donor and recipient countries. The ideas contained in the consultants' report (E/1992/64) and in the Nordic proposals contained in document E/1992/91 should be carefully considered in the interests of achieving more effective response by the Organization to the concerns of its membership.

An improved financing system for operational activities implied more equitable burden-sharing, the more sustained provision of resources and a substantially increased volume of programmes and funding. It was also important to maximize the overall impact of operational activities, and he commended the ideas expressed during the high-level segment by the Administrator of UNDP with regard to the restructuring of the United Nations development system and the views put forward by the representatives of various agencies with regard to technical cooperation among developing countries. Increased cohesiveness at the country level, together with rational decentralization and consistent system-wide personnel policies and the efficient use of available resources would be studied in the triennial review.

Romania had benefited from extensive cooperation with a variety of United Nations agencies, and was pleased to report that the country programme for 1992-1996, drawn up in close collaboration with the Resident Coordinator, reflected the new requirements of the emerging market economy and also Romania's participation in a number of regional projects for Europe.

Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines) said that the discussion on operational activities for development had been extremely fruitful. His delegation looked forward to the document which would prepare the groundwork for the forthcoming triennial policy review, and hoped that emphasis in implementing General Assembly resolution 44/211 would be placed on national programmes, field activities, the resident coordinator system, and decentralization - the latter with particular reference to accountability and training.

Enhancement of national capacities should be the primary concern of operational activities. Identified gaps in that respect should be addressed through collective effort. The role of the resident coordinators should be strengthened, with due emphasis on team leadership, and coordination at the field level should also be enhanced. The draft guidelines evolved by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) could provide a useful starting-point for reflection on the programming process.

It should be a fundamental principle that any assistance must be consistent with the recipient Government's plans and priorities. At the same time, efforts to decentralize should promote collaboration at the field level.

Mr. MARKS (United States of America) said that revitalization and restructuring in the economic, social and related fields was beginning to show results, pointing the way to a more effective Economic and Social Council. The newly created ad hoc working group on reform was an indication of the commitment to reorganization. An impressive agenda for change had been set.

The triennial policy review, due in the fall, would find a solid record of achievement over the past three years. UNDP Governing Council decisions on support costs and national execution had restructured the UNDP tripartite system of cooperation between UNDP, the major sectoral agencies and recipient Governments, which had remained basically unchanged since 1970. The new tripartite system gave UNDP greater control over the quality of support services from agencies, created incentives for agencies to strengthen their support for national policy, programming and implementation processes in recipient Governments, and encouraged Governments to take full responsibility for project management and administrative support.

(Mr. Marks, United States)

In addition, there had been movement away from the traditional project-by-project approach, which had often led to competition among donors for scarce staff and budgetary resources and had failed to build up national self-reliance. UNDP had initiated a programme-based approach to cooperation and national capacity-building which should strengthen national capacities to implement coherent development policies and make better use of development assistance.

Much remained to be done, however, particularly in terms of decentralizing to the country level, harmonizing the programming cycles of United Nations agencies and generally moving towards integration of development activities at the country level. The programme approach required the harmonization of programming and evaluation among funding agencies, the parallel decentralization of their technical capacities to the country level, and multidisciplinary management by resident coordinators.

Coordination could not, however, be achieved by administrative fiat, but should start from the sharing of goals and strategies by United Nations organizations. Most United Nations system resources supported bureaucratic infrastructures and a major restructuring of field operations would make more programme resources available.

His delegation supported a clear linkage between the resident coordinator function and the UNDP central funding function. In addition, centrally funded mechanisms were essential in mobilizing support by the United Nations system for national development programmes.

The resident coordinator must be given authority to develop an overall assistance strategy through a policy dialogue with the Government, with the aim of producing a unified United Nations system programme. The resident coordinator should also be the resident representative of the United Nations and its funding programmes. Such an approach would ensure integrated programming and overall coordination of United Nations activities, while preserving the autonomy of each individual programme. Further, the foundations would be laid for a unified field office which would eventually represent all the agencies of the system. That would improve cost-effectiveness.

(Mr. Marks, United States)

His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that there was a need to strengthen the relationship between research and policy analysis and operational activities for development; that the analytical capacity of the United Nations system should be increased and refocused on such cross-sectoral themes as sustainable development; and that the United Nations proper should refocus its involvement in operational activities on cross-sectoral areas in which it had a unique capacity. In particular, involvement of the United Nations proper in technical cooperation should be limited to analytical and technical support for activities financed by United Nations funding programmes, and should not include project management. The United Nations Secretariat could make a significant contribution to building up national capacities for programme management, but not through the provision of high-cost administrative and operational support services. Similarly, the specialized agencies should strengthen their analytical and technical capacities and move out of administrative and operational support functions. To that end, the UNDP Office for Projects Services should service the United Nations system as a whole.

Lastly, his delegation welcomed the Nordic proposals in document E/1992/91, especially with respect to governance.

Ms. DOWSETT (Observer for New Zealand) said that the spirit of cooperation evident from the current session augured well for the forthcoming triennial policy review, but that it was regrettable that the comprehensive report on operational activities was not yet available. Her delegation wished to highlight some of the aspects it would like to see covered in the report.

It was to be anticipated that the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211 would form the basis of the report, which would assess the uneven progress made by various elements of the United Nations system in implementing that resolution. It was further envisaged that the review would identify measures that might be taken to advance the objectives of the resolution and, perhaps most importantly, would address the need for the system to take into account the process initiated at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro.

(Ms. Dowsett, Observer, New Zealand)

The fact that the triennial review would be taking place at the same time as the General Assembly's consideration of the outcome of that Conference would provide a stimulus for some radical thinking on how the United Nations system could best ensure the integration of environment and development at the operational level.

General Assembly resolution 44/211 called for more integrated and coordinated programming of the United Nations system, and in that area the report should examine first and foremost the potential for an enhanced United Nations role in national programme formulation, and the ways in which to accelerate the shift to a programme approach. The issue of integrated programming and operational response had particular relevance for small developing countries with limited infrastructure. The report should also review programme accountability, an essential part of United Nations operational activities.

The report should outline ways of furthering national capacity-building, for example through national execution, training and other support measures. National capacities would also be strengthened by decentralization of the United Nations system, but that would depend on improved training at the field level and, most importantly, on full financial and programme accountability.

Last but not least, the proposals for a unified United Nations field presence and the designation of resident coordinators could usefully be examined with a view to strengthening the system.

Significant progress had already been made in revitalizing the economic and social sectors, and her delegation was greatly encouraged both by the success of the high-level segment and by the decision to establish an ad hoc working group to consider proposals for reform.

Mr. KING (Trinidad and Tobago) said that the United Nations had a pivotal role to play in promoting international cooperation in the interests of people-centred development. However, the current dialogue on international development cooperation suggested that there was a need to adapt the United Nations system so as to enhance its impact on the problems of the recipient countries. Steps must be taken to enable those countries to preserve and consolidate democratic principles, despite the development crisis, of the

(Mr. King, Trinidad and Tobago)

past decade and to take advantage of the opportunities which might arise in the 1990s.

The fundamental principles outlined in General Assembly resolution 44/211 should continue to be the basis for operational activities during the decade. For example, it was for the Governments of recipient countries to take external inputs into account in preparing their country programmes; national plans and priorities remained the only viable frame of reference for programming at the national level. The universality, and neutrality of those activities, and their voluntary and multilateral character, must also be preserved for the benefit of developing countries.

Coordination among secretariats at the headquarters level, as well as at the regional and national levels, required urgent attention to avoid duplication. Given the autonomy of the specialized agencies, the Administrative Committee on Coordination and its subsidiary bodies, in addition to the Joint Consultative Group on Policy, must be encouraged to continue their contribution towards greater coordination.

At the national level, the establishment of common premises, and the response of the United Nations system to a common programme document in the context of a programme approach to operational activities, should enhance coordination and promote the effective use of resources. It was essential to pursue excellence rather than competition between the various agencies.

He noted that successor arrangements for agency support costs continued to be studied in accordance with paragraph 25 of General Assembly resolution 44/211, but stressed that other elements of that resolution should not be overlooked. He awaited the report for the forthcoming triennial policy review.

There was still a lack of sustained and predictable funding to fulfil the needs of the developing countries. The proposals in the Nordic United Nations project (E/1992/91) were interesting, and should be considered by the new ad hoc working group.

His delegation agreed that the funding of operational activities and official development assistance, when considered under the heading of resources for development, were interrelated. However, operational activities

(Mr. King, Trinidad and Tobago)

occupied a specific niche in technical cooperation, one in which the United Nations system had a comparative advantage, partly because of its neutrality.

Mr. BAHR (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) welcomed the efforts being made to streamline management and end duplication while increasing the effectiveness of operational activities. There was clearly consensus on moving ahead with further reform. The Nordic countries had submitted proposals to that end, as had other members of the Council.

UNESCO was fully committed to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211. In that connection there seemed to be no serious dialogue between the various governing bodies. Effective coordination at the country level must also be achieved.

UNESCO feared that the specialized agencies, just as they were moving away from project execution to a new focus on strategy elaboration and sector analysis at the country level, might see their role weakened in a reinvigorated United Nations development system if their respective governing bodies were not involved from the outset in the quest for improved governance.

One element in the rationale for having originally established semi-autonomous United Nations specialized agencies had been recognition of the virtues of pluralism. Indeed, many valuable development initiatives had emerged from that system of unruly federalism, without a clear hierarchical structure. At a time when central planning and bureaucratic authoritarianism had fallen into disrepute, and when UNDP was proclaiming the virtues of participatory development, the calls for stricter lines of command in setting the parameters of multilateral development cooperation were somewhat surprising.

With regard to new support cost arrangements, substantive inputs from agencies into the system's development planning might drastically decline if the system was not soon running smoothly. In promoting national execution, it was important not to substitute UNDP services for national administration and management, otherwise there would be no clear distinction between national execution and what would, in effect, be additional direct execution by UNDP. A related issue was that of the coexistence in the same institution of

(Mr. Bahr, UNESCO)

system-wide coordination at the country level and direct execution of operational activities. Effective cooperation required a balance between convergence and complementarity.

The Nordic proposals envisaged a scheme whereby voluntary contributions would account for only 30 per cent of overall contributions, the remainder being negotiated pledges. Such a change might, however, signal the end of UNDP's donor-neutral, indicative-planning-figure pool of funding, a feature which had made for neutrality and universality. Lastly, his delegation supported the endeavours to increase the leadership role of resident coordinators, in which connection UNESCO would support a more neutral selection from a larger pool of candidates.

Mr. DYOMIN (Belarus) said that the post-confrontational world offered opportunities for a transition to a higher-level of international cooperation in tackling urgent global problems. The basis for a practical approach lay in General Assembly resolutions 44/211 and 46/219, the report on strengthening the operational activities of the United Nations system (E/1992/64), the decisions taken at the Rio Conference, and the Nordic United Nations project (E/1992/91).

Greater coordination was clearly required, but structural reform within the Organization must be undertaken circumspectly, allowing due time for analysis and assessment. It was essential to avoid the proliferation of new bodies, and the Economic and Social Council should have a coordinating role to avoid overlapping. The new working group might prepare a recommendation to that effect for submission to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

One promising proposal was to streamline the agencies responsible for funds and programmes. However, his delegation shared the view that the interests of all Member States must be properly represented within those bodies.

The informal discussions held the previous day had clarified, to some extent, the possibilities of a rapid transition to a programme approach to planning. The advantages afforded by that approach were indisputable, but again common sense must be the governing criterion. He could understand the

(Mr. Dyomin, Belarus)

reservations expressed by the representative of China with regard to the universal application of programmes. In the recent past, Belarus had experienced the impact of ambitious programmes which had fallen short of implementation.

His delegation agreed that voluntary contributions continue to be the most reliable source of funding. At the same time, in certain cases there might be recourse to several sources of funding from both voluntary and assessed contributions.

He supported the proposal for strengthening and regularizing interaction with the Bretton Woods institutions, with which his country was in direct contact.

In 1992 Belarus had been accorded the status of a recipient of technical assistance from UNDP, in line with the principle of universality, on which future United Nations operational activities should be based. Technical assistance for the reforms under way in his country would be advantageous to the developing countries by helping to strengthen their potential for development and assistance.

A United Nations office had recently been opened in Belarus, with technical cooperation as a primary concern. The UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus had shown complete understanding of the need to enhance the status of the Resident Coordinator in the course of the negotiations.

As a result of the difficulties experienced in the transitional period of restructuring the State institutions concerned with children and mothers, and owing to its lack of experience of government, Belarus had not yet finalized a national programme of action to implement the goals of the World Summit for Children. However, the Government was actively pursuing those goals, despite the difficulties of transition to a market economy and the enormous task of making good the damage caused by the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the 12 States members of the European Community, said that the European Community delegations would welcome comments from the specialized agencies indicating whether they had a common understanding of what a programme approach entailed. In particular, it would be of interest to know to what extent an

(Mr. Barnett, United Kingdom)

integrated approach was being taken to the successor States of the former Soviet Union, and what steps the Administrative Committee on Coordination was taking to define such an approach.

Mr. RADE (Observer for the Netherlands) asked what had been done by UNDP in terms of a unified approach towards United Nations system activities in the newly independent States.

Mr. WATT (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that steps had been taken by the specialized agencies to define a programme approach towards the newly independent States, although such an approach was not appropriate in all situations. Nevertheless, national leadership was always essential, posing the challenge of how the United Nations system could contribute. An impact had already been made and more results would follow. FAO had a contribution to make in its normative work in addition to its field operations. The agency was fully aware of the Council's desire for a coordinated approach and was willing to work along those lines.

Mr. DEANE (World Health Organization) said that the structure of WHO lent itself to a programme approach rather more than did the structure of some other specialized agencies. WHO typically dealt with ministries of health in every Government, which made it somewhat easier to coordinate inputs in line with a country's national health programme. WHO stressed health structures and tried to help develop methods that would assist Governments in addressing health issues. Some 60 per cent of WHO activities were funded through its regular budget, which made for continuity. The emphasis was on national execution.

A project-based approach was not incompatible with a programme approach, which should not be seen as a panacea. One feature of a fully integrated approach was a certain loss of visibility in terms of specific donors, in that it was harder to see the precise impact of a specific contribution. A programme approach could mean more flexibility in the sense of more upstream planning, but less flexibility in that it might be harder to reorient resources already committed, which might then make it necessary to approach donors for additional funding.

Lastly, WHO welcomed the interest displayed by many delegations in harmonizing the approach taken to issues of such importance to development.

Mr. KITATANI (United Nations Population Fund) said that, with regard to the programme approach, UNFPA fielded strategy and review missions, which involved Governments, relevant agencies and donors, with the aim of producing a national programme, and that guidelines were provided in advance to all concerned. Copies of the guidelines were available on request to Council members.

Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines) said that the developing countries needed help in capacity-building in order to prepare their medium-term and long-term development plans. The help provided by the United Nations system must be available at the outset for policy formulation, and must take into account possibilities for other external funding, either through bilateral official development assistance or through regional groups such as the Association of South-East Asian Nations. The chief difficulty would be in planning overall strategy, because of the likelihood that individual donors would stress particular programme components. Therefore, the United Nations system's response to capacity-building requirements should include efforts aimed at ensuring a well-balanced funding strategy and promoting a suitable alignment of the various projects established pursuant to the programmes.

Mr. SOUTTER (Canada) said that the recent shift in the United Nations development system, with its increased focus on the programme approach, seemed to have progressed more in some parts of that system than in others, as several members of the Council had observed. Therefore, he would like the specialized agencies and the Department of Economic and Social Development to express their views about the way in which the decentralization measures should proceed, including the role and recruitment sources of resident coordinators, and on how they foresaw their own organization's involvement.

Mr. BAHR (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that the United Nations system's responses could not be automatic or uniform, since government policies, which must be paramount in any development programme, all differed, and guidelines alone would provide no major solution, as could be seen when recalling the many guidelines produced in the past. Overemphasis of the machinery aspect seemed questionable in

(Mr. Bahr, UNESCO)

regard to a process in which the Government was the lead partner, and was surely not in the spirit of resolution 44/211.

UNESCO's own experience with the programme approach had been useful. Details of its work in a number of countries, including Benin, Chad and Viet Nam, could be made available to interested delegations, who were also invited to visit workshops in the field. The emphasis was strongly on national capacity-building, the international bodies serving only as providers of resources and expertise. Given a suitably flexible degree of coordination and the recognition that no simple universal mechanism existed, the highly satisfactory results achieved by UNESCO hitherto would doubtless continue. Lastly, he felt that the current exchange of views was very valuable.

Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan) stressed the importance of the experience gained by field personnel, some of whom should be invited to participate in the debate at future sessions. It was clear that the role of resident coordinator would need to be streamlined in the light of the many observations already made, including the comment by the representative of UNESCO about greater flexibility of coordination, and some guidelines seemed called for. One factor which perhaps weakened that role was occasional inter-agency conflict; she would therefore like the agencies' representatives to indicate what obstacles they foresaw. The final deliberations would of course have to take place in the General Assembly.

Mr. WATT (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that his organization's activities were already decentralized to a considerable degree despite budgetary constraints, which were, however, hampering further moves in that direction. Yet the proposed new support cost arrangements would have a centralizing effect; the inputs available under those arrangements had already forced FAO to relinquish over 100 field posts. Relations between field staff and resident coordinators were very good; he knew of no institutional difficulties in that regard. But he feared that to combine coordination and execution tasks in the resident coordinator's role created an ambiguity which could impair effectiveness. It should be noted, too, that over 80 per cent of the current incumbents' time was spent on UNDP

(Mr. Watt, FAO)

business. To sum up, he felt that the establishment of resident coordinators would be a positive step given the right modalities, including a better mechanism.

FAO field representatives contributed inputs to country programmes as well as operational functions, although the latter would continue to decline in the absence of adequate UNDP resources. FAO's experience in general bore out the effectiveness of adequate complementarity. Since the Council's deliberations often seemed based on perceptions rather than reality, he agreed that the inclusion of some field experience would be useful.

Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco) formally proposed that field representatives, including those of regional bodies and non-governmental organizations, should be invited to attend the Council's deliberations on operational activities. Perhaps the Bureau could consider the matter at the next organizational session. In addition, he would like the agencies' representatives to indicate what problems they envisaged with regard to a unified country-level structure for field activities. He was aware that a working group was to consider that topic, but his delegation would appreciate a preliminary response.

Mr. SORENSEN (International Labour Organisation) said he saw no basic difficulty in the programme approach, which stemmed from system-wide consultation, provided that it was viewed as a means of enabling a Government to pursue specific policies rather than of imposing a programme on it. The pattern should be one of a government programme to which the components of the United Nations system each contributed where it had a comparative advantage, and guided, wherever relevant, by the global principles and objectives established as a result of other work carried out by the United Nations system and intergovernmental bodies, such as in standard-setting.

ILO viewed the new framework as a challenge and an opportunity. It would like to see its own traditional tripartite partnership renewed and enhanced, since it was important that the new measures should continue to involve the technical contribution of the specialized agencies; otherwise, the activities would become another, more expensive form of bilateral assistance.

Various reforms were being implemented by ILO, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 44/211, especially in decentralization and coordination at

(Mr. Sorensen, ILO)

field level. The network of field advisers was being overhauled, and multidisciplinary teams were aiming at a more direct application of technical services in the context of the new support cost arrangements. The new trend should provide greater synergy in regular budget activities.

A second element of ILO's reforms was a new framework for defining field-level policies, involving a more systematic discussion of medium-term and long-term priorities and assistance targets. That approach should enhance and clarify ILO's own part in inter-agency efforts.

Thirdly, in view of constraints on resources, ILO was focusing increasingly on its core mandate and on those areas in which it enjoyed a clear comparative advantage. Nevertheless, it was still willing to become involved in other areas if its services were required.

On the question of relations with the resident coordinator, he felt that coordination had the greatest impact at country level when it focused on common goals and strategies. In that regard, a notable contribution had been made to the idea of promoting United Nations country teams by the series of workshops organized for resident representatives at the ILO training centre in Turin. That initiative had been very well received and a follow-up was being planned in the form of further training activities with emphasis on the training of national counterparts.

Mr. GORDON-SOMERS (United Nations Development Programme), replying to questions concerning the progress made in establishing a presence in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), noted that only six weeks had elapsed since the adoption of the relevant Governing Council decision, and that UNDP was engaged in an innovative operation with limited staff resources. Nevertheless, 11 missions had already been sent to the CIS and a growing understanding had been established between UNDP and the Governments concerned, laying the groundwork for a unified field presence in the six countries designated by the Secretary-General. In addition, the countries concerned had shown themselves willing to participate in the experience and to share the costs involved. The resources made available by the Governing Council were very modest and a highly cost-effective approach would therefore be required. He agreed that extensive consultation was required with other

(Mr. Gordon-Somers)

agencies concerning funds and programmes and acknowledged that there had been some shortcomings in information-sharing. However, a task force had now been set up and UNDP would attempt to supply it with all possible information. Indeed, a report had been submitted on 11 July 1992.

With regard to the recruitment of suitable individuals to run the new offices, he noted that a number of names had been submitted to the Secretary-General and to the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). With only $3 million available it was not possible to set up UNDP field offices of the traditional type and consequently it would be necessary to rely heavily on the individuals appointed to negotiate both with the countries concerned and with those donors willing to provide assistance in the form of trust funds or other contributions. The CIS operation offered an opportunity for constructive experimentation and the emphasis must be on finding the best individuals available and keeping costs to a minimum. A full report would be submitted to the Governing Council at its February 1993 session.

Mr. DEANE (World Health Organization), replying to questions concerning decentralization by the representatives of Canada and Morocco, pointed out that WHO had six regional offices with interregional committees, as well as 113 country offices. There was therefore substantial delegation of authority at country level, although the situation tended to vary in accordance with different regions and programmes.

On the question of resident coordinators, he felt that the United Nations system as a whole had accepted their team leadership role. In his view, that role was compatible with the lead agency concept. With regard to unified offices, WHO had a constitutional mandate requiring it to assist and advise national health authorities. As a result, its representatives were often based in national health ministries, which was the best place for them to offer guidance and promote dialogue with Governments. The focus of United Nations activity must be on developing structures to enable Governments to coordinate aid themselves in accordance with their own programmes. While recognizing that the United Nations system must be coordinated and integrated, he was not convinced of the need for actual physical integration at country level.

Mr. ALTESMAN (United Nations Children's Fund), replying to a question by the representative of the Netherlands, acknowledged that ACC had encountered problems in attempting to ensure adequate coordination. However, that was inevitable in dealing with a new and rapidly changing situation without a properly established staff. Missions to the CIS must be team missions and ways must be found of ensuring that the system as a whole was consulted and kept informed. Advance consultation was needed with organizations and their governing bodies before memoranda of understanding were negotiated with the CIS countries. A team approach was needed, with a team leader who was independent but represented the United Nations system as a whole.

Mr. SHOJI (Japan) said that the question of a unified presence in the CIS countries was still under review and no firm decision had yet been taken. However, the statement made by the representative of UNDP was inconsistent with the Secretary-General's report on the Chernobyl accident, which stated clearly that joint offices of the United Nations and UNDP would be set up in two countries, namely Ukraine and Russia. Furthermore, the UNDP Governing Council had drawn up criteria for the location of offices, specifying that they should be sited in the countries with the lowest per capita GNP and the largest country programme resources. In the light of those criteria, he would welcome clarification on how Russia and Ukraine had been selected.

Turning to the question of the relations between the ACC Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) (CCSQ (OPS)) and agencies, he noted that in May 1992 the Governing Council had announced new acceptance criteria for CCSQ (OPS) whereby projects would be selected if appropriate to the services which CCSQ (OPS) provided. One criterion was that cross-sectoral projects would be automatically eligible. He wanted to know whether the agencies found the criteria acceptable and what consultation there had been with agencies prior to their adoption.

Mr. CHASE (World Food Programme) said that his agency had collaborated extensively with other agencies, notably UNICEF and UNHCR, in providing emergency food assistance and meeting the special needs of refugees

(Mr. Chase)

in Nagorny-Karabakh and Armenia. However, much of the assistance had been provided by bilateral donors and WFP participation had not been seen as essential.

With regard to development activities, although it would be part of a more coherent United Nations presence in the long term, WFP involvement was not being contemplated at present. WFP was already having difficulties in meeting more pressing needs in the least developed countries, and there were no short-term plans to provide assistance in the CIS. Nevertheless, it would monitor the situation and would work closely in future with the lead agency, UNDP.

With regard to decentralization, improvements had been made in recent years and more recruitment was taking place at the field level. In addition, there was increasing delegation of authority and more delegations were being sent to the field. However, there were three main constraints on decentralization. The first, common to all agencies, was the considerable variation in the size of programmes and in the level of staff competence. The second, unique to WFP, was that the purchasing and allocation of food, as well as the relevant shipping arrangements, all had to be dealt with centrally at headquarters level. The third constraint concerned the agency's General Regulations, which stipulated that each specific funding activity had to be approved by its governing body. As a result, it was difficult for decisions on funding levels or programmes to be taken in the field.

In reply to the question by the representative of Pakistan concerning obstacles to more effective utilization of the role of resident coordinator, he noted that the fact that the UNDP resident representative was also the resident coordinator placed an inordinate burden on the individual concerned, making it very difficult for him to undertake the wide range of functions he was now called on to perform. In addition, the resident coordinator needed to have special capabilities in the field of team-building, and such qualities were sometimes hard to find. He also felt that resident coordinators needed to be provided with special funds and special staff if they were to perform effectively the coordinating and strategic functions under resolution 44/211.

The main goal of coordination was to ensure a coherent programme within

(Mr. Chase)

the United Nations system and among the various agencies, so as to ensure that the emphasis was placed on common areas and goals in the framework of priorities established by Governments. Considerable progress had been achieved towards that goal. However, he was not at all convinced that a United Nations ambassador could be empowered to take decisions affecting the level of activity or composition of other agencies without eroding the responsibility, authority and accountability of the heads of agencies.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.